

FACE INVESTIGATION

SUBJECT: Farmer killed after fall from and runover by moving windrower

SUMMARY:

A 63 year old white male life long farmer fell when he attempted to jump onto a moving, International 5000 windrower driven by a neighbor but owned by the victim. When the victim recognized that the neighbor could not control the machine, he tried to climb up the ladder to the cab and lost his balance, falling about 6 feet to loose soil where the left front tire of the windrower ran over his head. Given the extensive head trauma, no treatment was rendered by the first responders and the police. The coroner pronounced the victim dead at the scene approximately 27 minutes after the incident. The Wisconsin FACE investigator concluded that, in order to prevent similar occurrences, employers should: addressed:

! Train workers and address worker safety in the planning phases of projects

! Provide and enforce written safety policies that strictly forbid climbing onto moving machinery and working around machinery after using alcohol.

INTRODUCTION:

On August 15, 1992 at approximately 2:PM the victim sustained fatal crushing injuries when he fell from a moving windrower and was run over. The FACE investigator was notified by the Department of Industry Labor and Human Relations Workers Compensation Division on September 11, 1992. The investigation was initiated by the FACE investigator on March 17, 1993. Photographs were taken and the wife and son of the victim were interviewed. Reports were obtained from the coroner, sheriff's office and a death certificate was obtained.

The farmer had been employed in farming for 53 years, 30 years on the farm where the incident occurred. He had no employees but a neighbor came over and helped out occasionally.

There were no written safety rules and no safety officer on the farm. Anyone who helped out was shown how to do things at the time it was to be done. The victim was very familiar with high powered and sophisticated farm machinery.

INVESTIGATION:

The victim's neighbor was helping the victim cut hay on the victim's farm when the machine the neighbor was driving broke down. The victim had driven the windrower (International Harvester Company Model 5000) that morning and it had functioned without incident.

Apparently, when he got off the machine he did not engage the handbrake. This brake when engaged, will not let the machine turn or move. The neighbor had never operated the International 5000 windrower

before and when he began to operate the implement it lunged backwards, the handbrake not being engaged. The foot brake on this machine when pressed half-way down slows the machine, when pressed all the way down the machine moves in reverse. Since putting the brake all the way down caused the tractor he had operated for the victim in the morning to brake, he may have tried to brake the windrower in the same way. This full brake action continued to move the windrower in reverse. The victim tried to help his neighbor when he realized he could not control the machine. He jumped on the first step/deck of the moving implement, then he lost his balance and fell onto the ground. The neighbor was unable to stop the implement and the victim was run over by the front left wheel of the vehicle which caused his death. The windrower continued moving in reverse across the hayfield until it came to rest in a cornfield where it stopped. The only way to turn this machine off, it being diesel powered, is to hit the kill switch. Simply turning off the key or cutting back the throttle will not stop the machine. The toxicological report indicates that the victim had consumed alcohol prior to the incident. Weather was not a contributing factor in this incident as it was dry and sunny.

CAUSE OF DEATH: Crushing head trauma, massive multiple fractures of ribs and fracture of pelvis.

Toxicology reports showed BAC of .25/210 liters.

RECOMMENDATIONS/DISCUSSION:

Recommendation #1: Train workers and address worker safety in the planning stages of all work projects.

Discussion: The neighbor using the machine was not familiar with the machine and did not receive training and instruction in machine operation. Planning for the work may well have excluded the possibility of the neighbor using a machine he had never operated and included cessation of the work or locating a trained operator to run the machine.

Recommendation #2: Written safety policies regarding procedures to be followed.

Discussion: Written policy may have reinforced a strict policy forbidding climbing onto moving machinery and working around machinery after using alcohol.

General Discussion: Important features such as the braking mechanism are not consistent between farm machines. In diesel machines turning off the ignition does not stop the vehicle. Further consideration is needed regarding uniformity in the manufacture and operation of farm equipment.